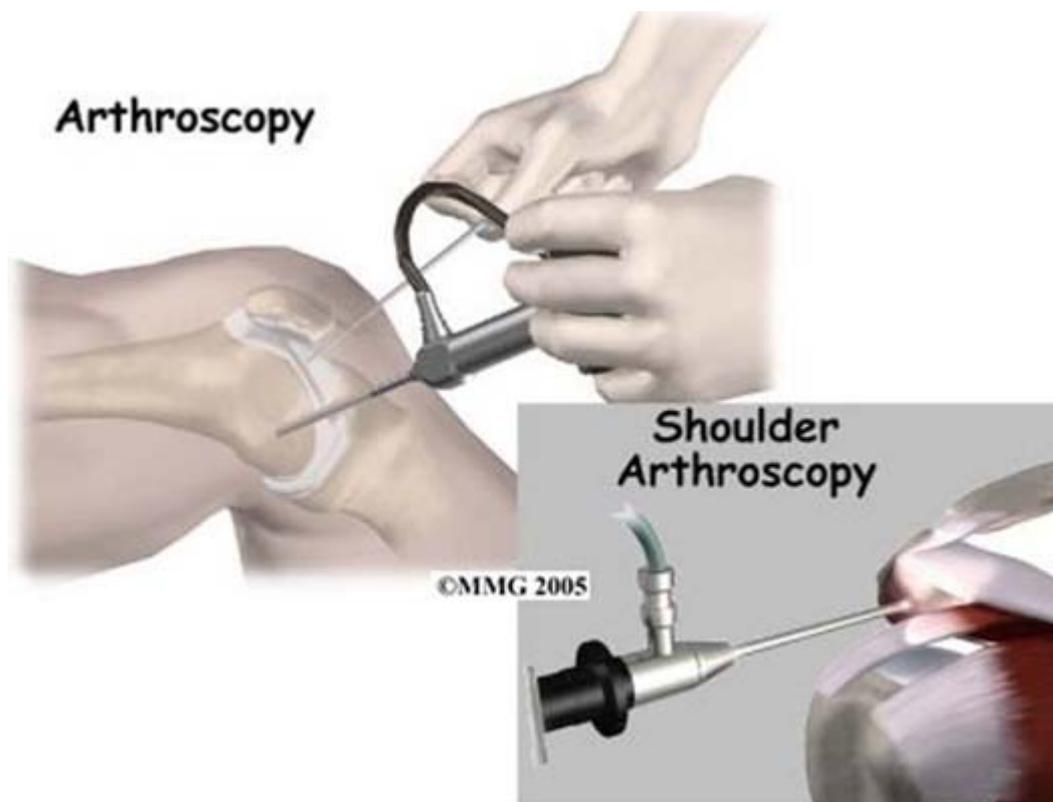




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Arthroscopy



What is it?

The term arthroscopy basically means to look into the joint. (Arthro means joint, and scopy means look.) So the common phrase scope the joint means to insert an arthroscope into the joint and have a look.

Over the past several years, the development of very small video cameras and specialized instruments have allowed surgeons to do more than simply take a look into the joint. The arthroscope is now used more and more for actual surgical procedures. Involves making smaller incisions into the joint.

As surgeons have become familiar with this type of surgery, more surgical procedures that were once done with large incisions are now being done arthroscopically.

Why is it better?

Surgical damage is less with arthroscopic surgeries.
Small incision means less chance for infection
The recovery time following arthroscopy is shorter.

Arthroscopy has also greatly expanded orthopedic surgeon's understanding of problems around the joints.

What joints are being scoped?

Just about every joint in the body has been scoped, but the vast majority of surgical procedures done with the arthroscope are done on the knee and the shoulder.

Probably the most common use of the arthroscope initially was to remove loose bodies from the knee joint or to remove a torn cartilage or torn meniscus. A loose body is a fragment of bone or cartilage that moves around inside the joint and can get caught between the two bones of the joint and cause pain.

The menisci (or cartilages) of the knee are two small pieces of tissue that sit between the two bones of the knee joint and act similar to a gasket. A torn meniscus is a common problem that involves these structures and can get caught between the knee and cause pain.

Preoperative

Your doctor will meet with you to explain what the surgery is intending to accomplish. You will be asked to sign a surgical consent form that describes the operation and the potential risks.

Admission

Most arthroscopic surgical procedures are done as a day case : able to go home the same day. Some arthroscopically assisted procedures still require larger incisions to be made around the joint, and these larger procedures may require a night or two stay in the hospital.

Anesthesia

In general, anesthesia may be local, regional, or general. Each of these types of anesthesia has advantages and disadvantages, but all are quite safe.

Regional Anesthesia

Regional anesthesia is probably the most common type used for arthroscopy. This is done by injecting lidocaine around the nerves that go to an extremity (in a spinal block, these are the nerves that go to the legs).

The advantages to this type of anesthesia are that it does not affect the function of the lungs (a concern if you have lung problems). It does not cause as much nausea as general anesthesia, and it is relatively safer than general anesthesia.

General Anesthesia

General anesthesia is commonly referred to as going to sleep. It is commonly used for arthroscopic procedures--especially procedures which may be long and complicated. The advantages of general anesthesia are that you are not aware of anything that occurs during surgery.

Surgery

When the surgery starts, several small incisions are made into the joint. These are usually about one-quarter of an inch long. The number varies from one to about six depending on what will be done. The joint is then filled with clear fluid (usually similar to the salt solution used in intravenous fluids).

Once the surgery is under way, various instruments are used to perform the procedure. The camera is used to view the inside of the joint while the other instruments are used to either remove or repair the problem.

Recovery

After surgery you will be taken from the operating room into the recovery room. Normally, you will remain in the recovery room thirty to sixty minutes.

Discharge

Once you are ready to be released from the recovery room, you will probably return to where you started--the outpatient surgery department. Here you can wait with your family or friends until you are ready to be released to go home.

What are the risks of arthroscopy?

Risks associated with anesthesia.

The arthroscopy procedure itself can result in damage to the joint structures

Small risk of damage to nerves and blood vessels around the joint.

Infection of the joint or soft tissues around the joint can occur after arthroscopy [$<1\%$]

Deep venous thrombosis (DVT), can occur after arthroscopy

What should I do after my arthroscopy?

You should take it easy for several days following surgery.

You should watch for any signs of infection such as fever or chills, redness around the incisions,

For specific instructions for your procedure you should consult your doctor.